February it never seemed to end.

The atmosphere changed when it got dark outside the big bay window. It made our crummy office like a parlor again. The bedside table-lamps on the mantle and the little round table weren't just chintzy. They were intimate. Adam's voice was reassuring. I said I wanted a voice like his was all the time. So smooth it seemed pasteurized. What an asset for a "front-line worker." He said he was just burn-out. I said maybe he needed another vacation. He said he thought he'd go away. I said that wasn't a good idea. It was hard to get a job these days. He stared at me for a moment. It was as if someone had broken the big bay window and the night rushed in with the cold air to emphasize that wasn't what he meant.

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Getting off is just escapism. Who knows what into? It might take billions of years for the polar express to arrive at that station somewhere north of Archangel. North of Finland. But it will. Global warming will only be a memory growing cold. Getting off is the surest way to arrive ahead of schedule. The station master will be a skeleton made of ashes and glue. He'll speak Russian and Italian. Adam always wanted to learn another language. He'll offer Caspar one of his daughters and a Lucky Strike.